

## JOHN RUSKIN'S LETTERS.

FORTY YEARS' WRITING IN PRINT.

MR. RUSKIN'S DISSEMINATED EPISTLES BY TWO VOLUMES EDITED BY AN OXFORD PUBLISHER.

—THE ART CRITIC'S OPINION OF HIMSELF AND OTHERS—A TRIBUTE TO ABRAHAM LINCOLN—

CRITICISMS OF THOMAS HUGHES, J. S. MILL AND OTHERS—AND OF THE CONTEMPORARIES.

FROM THE MANUSCRIPTS OF THE LATE MR. RUSKIN.

LONDON, DEC. 11.—Under the quaint characteristic title, "The Elements of the Chase," the letters which Mr. Ruskin has been writing during the last forty years to the newspapers have been collected and published in two large 8vo volumes. The collecting and editing of them has been done by an Oxford pupil, to whom it has been a labor of love—of intellectual love also, since to his mind editing means something more than merely reprinting and proof-reading. Where the letters need annotation notes are plentifully given; the circumstances of their publication are stated; the substance of other letters to which they are replies is given; the letters are classified by subjects, and there is a good index. Never before, I should say, has so much care been expended on a reproduction of merely casual communications. The book is an extension to the periodical press.

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tion of Van de Veld; noting also that Waagen in

revising his book for a second edition, while repeating

these passages with only verbal alterations, acknowledged

his ignorance of Turner at the time it was first

written, and gives a high estimate of his

artistic value.

For that facility of change and honest confession

of it, if for nothing else, Mr. Ruskin ought to con-

demn Dr. Waagen's original offense; Mr. Ruskin

himself setting a little store by mere consistency as

even men were wanting, of the evidence of changing

moods, but I changed the other day upon one as

curious as any. I had bought the "Elements of

Drawing," now a scarce book, to give to a boy who

for some months past had been hard at work by

his master in the study and practice of perspective.

Imagine my dismay at this, and that in the pre-

face to the Elements perspective is dismissed con-

temptuously as a thing of which no boy need know

more than can be learned by looking at an object

through a pane of glass; that the great painter

could do nothing for it, that no great painter ever did

or ever would paint in true perspective, and so on. I

put the book away, considering that, whether Mr.

Ruskin were right or wrong, it was hardly worth

while to put his disparaging opinion before a boy

who had been giving a great deal of energy to master-

ing it. A week later I came upon a volume not

much smaller than the "Elements of Drawing," en-

titled "The Elements of Perspective," dated, I

think, two years later; the author it is John Rus-

kin; with a preface, also, in which I could find no

kind of reference to what he had been saying so

shortly before against the study on which he now

thought it worth while to compose an elaborate

treatise. This also I bought, and gave to the boy

the younger in question; relating that he might

possibly learn something of human nature out of

them as well as of perspective.

The references to America or to the United States

in these two volumes are not numerous. For one

reason or another, because of his often

avowed hatred of Liberalism, Mr. Ruskin loves us

too well. He will not even visit us; though he

has, as he tells us, kind invitations enough; he

"could not, even for a couple of months, live in a

country so miserable as to possess no castles!" I

looked for a still more tremendous passage which I

remember, but which must occur in some speech or

printed book—I mean that in which this amiable

enthusiast remarks that he would like to pull down

the New Town of Edinburgh and rebuild it; and

pull down New York and not rebuild it; and

pull down London and not rebuild it; and

pull down the English mind as an edifice, and

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ing in the security given to the conclusions arrived

at in many subjects treated of in these letters, in

consequence of the breadth of the basis on which

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